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# PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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## THE CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

In a recent number of the monthly bulletin of the New York State Department of Health there appeared an account of 'an epidemic of septic sore throat which had occurred at Rockville Center, just out of New York City. The epidemic was due to infected milk from a dairy at which cases of septic sore throat were found among the employees. The epidemic was stopped by prohibiting the sale of milk from the dairy. The report concludes with the following statement:

The experience of this epidemic leads to the conclusion that the following measures are of the utmost importance in every municipality:

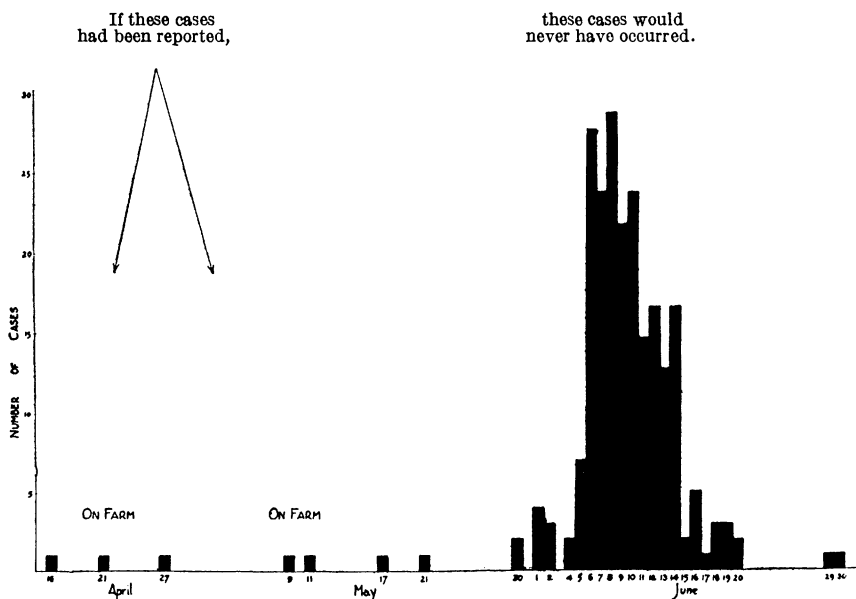
1. The prompt reporting by practicing physicians of all cases of sore throats and other infectious diseases among employees in dairies.
2. The exclusion from dairies of every person having an infectious disease, even if it appears only to be a common sore throat.
3. A prompt quarantine by the local health officer of every dairy whose owner or manager fails to exclude helpers who are known to be infected.
4. The pasteurization of all milk supplies.

A chart showing the numbers and dates of occurrence of the cases of septic sore throat was included in the report. This chart was apparently used to emphasize the importance of having cases of communicable diseases reported to the health department and the absolute necessity that this be done if these diseases are to be controlled. The chart illustrates the necessity for morbidity reports so well that it was reprinted in the weekly bulletin of the New York City Department of Health in its issue of September 12, 1914. The New York City Department of Health was especially interested in the outbreak because of its proximity to the city. The chart brings out the function of morbidity reports so clearly that it is reproduced herewith.

Epidemics of sore throat spread by milk have been of not infrequent occurrence in England. They have probably occurred not only there, but also in other countries where raw milk is used. The English, however, have associated the outbreaks with the milk and reports of the epidemics have appeared in English medical literature.

During the last few years epidemics of septic sore throat of considerable size, and spread through the agency of milk, have occurred in a number of American cities. Several of the larger of these outbreaks have been reported in the medical press.

The occurrence of such outbreaks could be avoided if pasteurized milk only was used. However, owing to the prejudice of many people against pasteurized milk, this method of preventing the spread by milk of septic sore throat and of other diseases—among which are typhoid fever, scarlet fever, and diphtheria—is not practicable in all instances. The time may come when pasteurized milk only will be used, and then there will be no more epidemics of these diseases spread by milk. In the meantime, however, it will be the duty of health



The story of the epidemic of septic sore throat at Rockville Center, Long Island.

departments to prevent their occurrence in so far as possible. To do this, it is necessary that early information be obtained of the occurrence of cases of these diseases.

In septic sore throat this is not always easy, for the differential diagnosis between septic sore throat and other and more common types of pharyngitis and tonsillitis is not always a simple matter and must frequently be in doubt. This is one of the difficulties encountered in securing satisfactory morbidity reports of the disease. However, since septic sore throat must be controlled by the health department, the matter of having cases reported is a thing which the health officer must work out satisfactorily. As previously mentioned, milk outbreaks could be prevented by the use of pasteurized milk. However, this would not lessen the necessity for the early reporting

of cases, for the diseases which are spread by milk are frequently, and in fact generally, spread in other ways as well and the milk route of infection is not the only one to be guarded against.

The chart shown above illustrates the purpose of morbidity reports and their relation to the control of disease and the prevention of epidemics. That the securing of morbidity reports is attended in many diseases with considerable difficulty is true. This constitutes an obstacle in the control of many of the commoner communicable diseases, an obstacle, however, which health departments must solve and overcome if they are to continue to have a cause for being.

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## THE CHEMICAL DISINFECTION OF WATER.

By EARLE B. PHELPS, Professor of Chemistry, Hygienic Laboratory, United States Public Health Service.

The chemical disinfection of water supplies has come into such general use that there can no longer be any doubt of its practical value. Most of the large cities of the country and hundreds of smaller communities are now using the disinfection process with entire satisfaction. It is so economical and so simple to install and to operate and furnishes such assurance of freedom from water-borne infection that its use should be encouraged whenever there is any possible doubt as to the sanitary character of the water supply.

There are few untreated water supplies in the United States to-day, except those taken from wells, which are so well protected that they do not at times show evidences of pollution. Whether the pollution is only remote and occasional or whether it is continual but only slight in amount, the installation of a disinfecting plant for continuous use or for use during danger periods represents a cheap insurance against epidemics. As an adjunct to filtration it furnishes an additional safeguard against occasional failure and often permits more rapid rates of filtration and important economies in the use of chemicals and in other ways.

Of the various agencies that have been proposed for the chemical disinfection of water only three—ozone, hypochlorite of calcium, and gaseous chlorine—have thus far proven satisfactory.

Ozone has had an extensive development in Europe and will undoubtedly be more widely used as the electrical and mechanical features of the process are better understood and worked out. It is undoubtedly efficient when properly applied, but mechanical imperfections and the high cost of operation have thus far delayed its adoption in this country.

The gaseous chlorine process is of recent introduction and as yet is not generally known. It is covered by general process patents, and